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Subject: Dairy Farms Accused Of Contaminating Water Supply In Wisconsin

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Dairy Farms Accused Of Contaminating Water Supply In Wisconsin

By Sara Jerome
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A coalition of environmentalists petitioned the federal government to crack down on dairy farms that are allegedly polluting the water supply in Wisconsin.

"Prompt and decisive emergency action from EPA under the Safe Drinking Water Act is needed in Kewaunee County, Wisconsin," the coalition of environmental groups wrote in the petition. "Kewaunee County has an extensive and well-documented history of nitrate and bacteria contamination in the regional groundwater aquifer, which is the sole source of drinking water for approximately 95 percent of the county's population."

It is "all too common" for local wells to serve brown, foul-smelling water, according to the petition.

"As of June 2013, nearly a third (30.85%) of tested wells in the county contained bacteria, nitrate, or both at levels that exceed state and federal public health standards," the petition said.

Blaming the 200 dairies that are local to the county, the groups called on the EPA to take action.

"The threat to public health in Kewaunee County due to nitrate and bacteria pollution of groundwater is present, pervasive, and unlikely to change absent EPA action," the petition said.

What kind of action are the environmentalists looking for?

"The groups are hoping that EPA will act as it did in 2013 in Washington's Yakima Valley. The EPA, using its authority under the Safe Drinking Water Act, negotiated with five dairies to change their manure handling practices after finding that dairies were the likely source of nitrate pollution," according to the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism.

The coalition includes Clean Wisconsin, Midwest Environmental Advocates, Midwest Environmental Defense Center, the Environmental Integrity Project, Clean Water Action Council of Northeastern Wisconsin, and Kewaunee CARES, the report said.

In the Yakima Valley saga, the EPA eventually won an agreement from the dairies to be more environmentally-conscious. The agreement concluded "months of negotiations that began after an agency report in September labeled the dairies likely sources of nitrate contamination in private drinking water wells," the *Yakima Herald* reported.

For more on policy and politics, check out Water Online's Regulations & Legislation Solution Center.

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